

Meeting of regional cash working groups West and Central Africa

Minutes

Place : Virtual and face-to-face

Date : March 06th, 2024 (9-11H GMT)

Participants : 81 including 23 women

Organizations : OCHA, CALP Network, NRC, Solidarités international, IOM, WFP, CAFOD, UNICEF, Mercy Corps, Caritas, IFRC, Helping Hands, CHABASH, NGS Bulgaria, FAO, UNHCR, USAID, OXFAM, CRS, Red-Cross, World Vision, WHO, Action against Hunger, ICRC, HEKS-EPER, IRC, OpenMali, Borno Women Development Initiative and Heal Africa.

Context

The second meeting of the year for the regional Cash Working Group (CWG) for West and Central Africa was held on March 06. The meeting is part of the support provided by the regional CWG to the region's national CWGs, with financial support from the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA/USAID). The meeting was co-organized with the OCHA regional office.

The agenda of this meeting is centered around a roundtable discussion on the recent activities of the various national CWGs and two presentations on CVAs in complex areas, followed by question-and-answer segments, all with simultaneous interpretation in English and French.

1- Roundtable of the different national Cash Working Groups

Available on recording (3mn- 45mn)

- **Burkina Faso CWG**

- Status quo on the ban on cash transfers since the end of 2023.
- Advocacy work underway to find alternatives to the suspension of CVAs.
- Discussions are in progress to set up a new government program to support vulnerable households with cash transfers for the upcoming lean season. The program is not yet operational but is currently in the process of mobilizing resources. This program could serve as a gateway for CVA humanitarian actors.
- In response to BHA/USAID's question concerning the evolution of the objectives set to alleviate the CVA limitation, the CWG clarified that a deadline cannot be determined, and the current recommendations are to opt for in-kind assistance and to consider other alternatives. However, the advocacy is of a political nature and carried by humanitarian coordinators and donors.

- **Cameroon CWG**

- Finalization of alignment with the new coordination model.
- Following this year's recent elections, WFP was elected Programmatic Co-Chair and OCHA assumes the non-programmatic lead.
- Ongoing discussions with sub-national CWGs to capitalize on results achieved with local and international NGOs and social safety net programs.
- Implementation of the CVA feasibility study in line with the 2024 action plan validated by the Humanitarian country team, consisting of capacity building, strengthening the links between CVA and social protection, technical support on monitoring transfer values, and the impact of rising fuel prices on the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) and transfer values.

- This study brings together social protection and humanitarian actors to harmonize transfer values.
- **Democratic Republic of Congo CWG**
 - Launch of the Senior Advisory Group (SAG) to ensure the accountability of the coordination team to its members. 38% INGOs, 37 local NGOs and 25% UN agencies make up this group, and it is planned to hold 3 to 4 meetings a year.
 - Collaboration with the Central Bank for market monitoring:
 - 1- Data collection on sectors of WASH, shelter, and education.
 - 2- Information on registered suppliers.
 - 3- Detailed mapping of financial service providers (FSPs);
 - The results of the FSP survey launched in November, in which 25 of the 36 responses collected were validated, show that it would be more relevant for humanitarian actors to use non-traditional FSPs or even small businesses, economic recovery organizations and cooperatives to cover hard-to-reach areas.
- **Mali CWG**
 - Collaboration with the protection cluster to integrate the CVA modality into response options - Initiation of a Cash & Protection taskforce - development of guidelines.
 - Collaboration with the Mali social protection working group - Mobilization of resources for the recruitment of a consultant to strengthen links between CVA and SP - Collaboration with the government on the development of a SP framework.
 - Selection of IRC as Programmatic Co-Chair for 2024.
 - The 2023 CWG annual report is available online.
- **Niger CWG**
 - Revision of the MEB in response to a 32% increase in food prices over the last six months (WFP study and follow-up) - Current MEB inadequate for needs - Consultation with all cluster coordinators - Discussions planned with the national mechanism.
 - Launch of the programming matrix survey aimed at:
 - 1- To better involve the government from the targeting stage through to distribution, including complaints mechanisms, monitoring, and evaluation.
 - 2- To develop infographics enabling partners to explain their roles and missions, with the aim of increasing the transparency of their activities and managing administrative restrictions.
- **Nigeria CWG**
 - Rami Beirkdar/CRS, new Colead of the Nigeria CWG based in Maiduguri, in the North-East of the country.
 - Five priorities emerged from the annual CWG workshop held in February:
 - 1- Joint activities with colleagues from the DRC and the food security sector in analyzing needs and monitoring markets in the North-East region.
 - 2- Final stages of FSP mapping and questionnaire.
 - 3- Republishing of the current year's work plan, considering new priorities.
 - 4- Revision of the terms of reference in line with the new coordination model.
 - 5- Strengthening of links between CVA and SP encouraged by the operationalization of the government led national CVA policy.
- **Central African Republic CWG**
 - Sharing of the MEB framework with the various clusters and various steps taken to update the MEB and transfer values.
 - Several CALP training courses are planned:

- 1- A second CALP training session on basic CVA skills, primarily targeting government social protection and humanitarian affairs officers.
- 2- Training in market analysis.

- **Chad CWG**

- Update about refugees and returnees: 559,423 refugees of which an average of 159,063 households, 88% women and children - number of returnees 144,000 of which 93% women and children.
- Compilation and sharing of activities carried out in 2023 on the Dashboard scheduled for March.
- MEB update planned for the end of March.
- Elections for Programmatic Co-Chair and Facilitator positions scheduled within the month.

If you would like to receive more information about one of our national CWGs, you can contact the leads and coleads of the countries concerned directly at the following link:
<https://www.calpnetwork.org/community/cash-working-groups/> (Please select the relevant country).

- 2- **Use of Cash and Vouchers Assistance in community-based projects in hard-to-reach areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo. NRC**

Available on recording (45mn – 1H18mn)

The first presentation of this meeting is a sharing of experience around CVAs related to community projects in hard-to-reach areas, specifically the provinces of Beni and Djugu in eastern DRC. These provinces are confronted with three access problems: logistical, physical and security, to which must be added the inter-community tensions that are an obstacle to stability in these areas. Community projects have been set up to bring together antagonistic communities around micro-projects, following a mediation process, the presentation of community action plans and a study of the relevance of the proposed projects. The particularity of this project lies in the fact that NRC plays the role of facilitator and provides expertise in project development, while community leaders and local authorities play the key roles.

- **Approaches:**

- The first approach is to raise community awareness to identify potential conflicts and implement a preventive response.
- The second step is to bring together local authorities to identify conflicts that can be resolved through inclusive projects involving all communities.

- **Achievements:** Construction of classrooms, health centers, washing facilities, shelters for displaced persons, road rehabilitation, market sheds, etc. (Challenges see PPT).

- **Lessons learned:** This project offers a dual response to communities: localization and cash transfers, which gives communities greater ownership of the project. It also alleviates some of the physical, logistical and security constraints associated with providing assistance in hard-to-reach areas, since implementation is carried out by local experts. This initiative reinforces the responsibility and accountability of community members by ensuring the continuity of achievements.

The posted presentation on the CALP page is only available in French, on the CALP page:
<https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/20240306-NRC-CWG-Presentation-Cash-project-H2R-V2.pdf>.

3- Cash transfer project in Niger: emergency response and sustainable support for livelihoods in hard-to-reach areas. Solidarités international

Available on recording (1h18mn – 1H31mn)

In the same perspective as the first presentation, the second also deals with humanitarian assistance in the hardest-to-reach areas, specifically in Gothèye, a commune in the Tillabéry region of Niger. This response is twofold: a response to the immediate needs of displaced populations of less than three months via multiple purpose cash assistance (MPCA), coupled with a response to food security and livelihoods (TM for the lean season, distribution of agricultural inputs, development of market gardening sites and support through training).

The particularity of this project is that the aid provided is a complement to other programs that may exist in the same region, and the results of this assistance have shown that it is mainly used for food commodities. In terms of success, the project has targeted and reached beneficiaries who are not always covered by rapid response mechanisms, particularly in an unstable security context, and has also won the acceptance of affected populations through sustainable livelihood programs. The full presentation is only available in French on the CALP page : https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NGR_Transferts-monetaires_Presentation-CWG-Regional.pdf.

4- Presentation and validation of the regional CWG's annual plan. OCHA/CALP Network

Available on recording (1H31mn – end)

This annual plan was drafted in collaboration with OCHA, and the advisory group recently launched at the beginning of the year. This annual plan considers the priorities that emerged from the 2023 perception survey. The full document is available for download at this link : <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Plan-annuel-2024-regional-CWG-WCAF.xlsx>.

All the activities and research selected for 2024 are as follows:

- Organization of Regional CWG meetings.
- Organization of a face-to-face meeting of leads and co-leads of the region's CWGs in Dakar.
- Support CWGs so that they can participate in the drafting of HRPs/HNOs.
- Capacity building (training and other specific technical supports: MEB, 5W, etc.).
- Organization of an online workshop with CWGs on how to adapt cash transfer program to inflation/depreciation.
- Support CWGs in planning activities and mobilizing resources.
- Participate in the ICCG, the regional IASC, and other platforms' meetings (such as the regional social protection platform, the regional taskforce on access and humanitarian principles, the FSNWG, etc.).
- Mapping of CVA related research / current or planned.
- Consider how to reduce the risk of other cash bans in the region (e.g. Burkina Faso and Togo).
- Organize a perception survey for the regional CWG.
- Start to work on the annual plan for 2025.